MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

ADDRESS

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OF

EARL STANHOPE,

PRESIDENT

OF THE

Medico = Botanical Society,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

JANUARY 16, 1829.

London:

PRINTED BY J. WILSON, GEORGE-COURT, PICCADILLY.

1829.

At the Anniversary Meeting of the MEDICO-BOTANICAL SOCIETY, *holden the* 16*th day of January,* 1829,—*It was moved by* JOHN FROST, *Esq.* F.R.S. Ed. *Director, Seconded by* GEORGE G. SIGMOND, M.D. F.S.A.

AND RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the warmest Thanks of the Society be offered to the Right Honourable the Earl STANHOPE, for his very excellent and comprehensive Address to the Society, and that His Lordship be respectfully solicited to allow the same to be printed for distribution amongst the Members of the Society.

JOHN P. YOSY,
Secretary.

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ADDRESS.

Gentlemen,

In addressing you upon this Anniversary, I am happy to find many subjects of joy and congratulation, although there are, unfortunately, some of a contrary description, which call for my condolence. The melancholy loss which this Society has recently sustained, by the resignation of its excellent and revered President, Sir James McGrigor, cannot fail to excite the deepest grief in the minds of all those who duly appreciated his merits and his services. He commanded your respect by his numerous talents and acquirements, by his long and extensive experience, by his great and well-merited reputation, by the high rank which he held in his profession, and by the important official station with which he was invested by his Sovereign. He was endeared to you by his amiable disposition, by the urbanity and kindness of his manners, by his ardent zeal for your welfare, and by his attachment to your interests. He deserved your warmest gratitude, and will, I am sure, receive your cordial thanks for the fostering care with which he promoted the objects of this Society, and to which you are so much indebted for the protection that it has enjoyed, and for the prosperity that has attended its progress. The retirement of such a President from an office which he filled with so much honor

to himself, and with so much advantage to this Society, is a misfortune which it is impossible to repair, and must deeply be deplored; and the only circumstances that can afford us any consolation, are, his continuance in our Council, and the assurance which he has given us, that he is animated by the same zeal, and that he will persevere in using the same exertions for our success. We have the satisfaction to reflect, that he has not been snatched from us by the hand of death; but that he yet lives for the happiness of his friends, to whom he is justly dear, and for the advantage of his country, to which he renders such valuable services, and of this Society, which had reason to be proud of such a President. We must do justice to the motives which influenced his retirement, to the conscientious feeling which he entertained that the duties of his high and responsible situation could not be fully executed by him, without neglecting, in a manner which would be painful to himself, and injurious to you, those which he owed to the Society. He was induced, in consequence, to retire from this Chair, and to decline the proposal that had been made to him, of presiding over the Medico-Chirurgical Society, a circumstance which he has indeed noticed in his Letter of Resignation. You are also aware, that the intention which he has at length fulfilled, was not rashly or inconsiderately adopted, and you find it recorded, in the Minutes of the last Anniversary, that he then expressed his regret at having been very frequently prevented from attending your meetings, and his hope and expectation that you would, in the ensuing year, allow him to quit the Chair.

The sorrow and embarrassment which his retirement has occasioned, is felt most severely by you all; and I speak in all the sincerity of my heart when I declare, that it is particularly felt by the individual who now

addresses you, and whom you have been pleased to select as his successor. On me devolves the weighty responsibility of an office which I did not solicit, and for which I have not the vanity and presumption to consider myself qualified. Although I feel most grateful for your kindness and partiality, and prize, as it deserves, that honor which I owe to your confidence and good opinion, I am aware that I must, unhappily, exhibit a striking contrast to the qualities which distinguished your late President, and that I cannot boast of those scientific attainments, nor of that medical knowledge, which must be important, and which may be regarded as indispensable for that situation. I am aware that an eminent Physician, like your late President, is more peculiarly qualified for this office; and if such a person were proposed on this occasion, you will do me the justice to believe, that I would not enter into competition with him, and indeed I could not do so without unpardonable presumption. May I venture, however, to hope that I shall be favoured with your kind indulgence, which I so much require in discharging the duties of this office, and that I may enjoy the happiness of which I am ardently desirous, of promoting your welfare by my unremitting assiduity, by my industry, which, as I am not employed in any profession, or in any public situation, I am the more able to exert in your service, and by the zeal which, from early youth, I have always felt for the objects of this Society, and which is founded upon my firm conviction that they are, of all others, the most important, and the most beneficial, to this Country and to Mankind. The excursions which I frequently make to Germany, where objects of utility are pursued with patience, with perseverance, and with pre-eminent success, and where the practice of Medicine is very different, will, I trust, be of advantage to this Society, by enabling me to

collect much interesting and valuable information. Allow me to assure you, that if these occasional absences should be thought by you to be objectionable, or if you should prefer, for your President, a person belonging to the Medical Profession, and if, at the next, or at any succeeding anniversary, you should wish me to quit this office, I shall resign it without hesitation, and should rejoice to see it more worthily bestowed; and that in every situation in which I may be placed, whether as the President, or merely as a Member of this Society, my humble exertions, whenever and wherever they can be useful, will be employed in your service with unabated activity and zeal.

The resignation of our late President is not the only loss which this Society has sustained; for in the course of the last year it was deprived of one of its brightest ornaments, by the death of Sir J. E. Smith, the Founder, and, during nearly forty years, the President of the Linnean Society. Devoted, from an early period of his life, to the study of Botany, and distinguished, till its close, by his laborious researches in that science, he did not confine them to those rare and curious exotics which are so often the chief, if not the only objects of inquiry; on the contrary, he had the merit of preferring utility to other considerations, and he directed his attention principally to those Plants which are indigenous to his native country. He purchased, and was worthy to possess, the Herbarium of Linnæus, which, in his hands, continued to be employed with great practical advantage, and was not merely preserved for its curiosity, or as the ornament of a museum. His numerous and invaluable Works, which are an imperishable monument of his reputation, will secure to his name the veneration of posterity, as well of his cotemporaries, whose gratitude and admiration he so deservedly acquired. His death is a

grievous and irreparable misfortune to the Linnean Society, for which, in common with you all, I entertain great respect, and to which the world is so much indebted for the industry and success with which it has cultivated Botany and other branches of Natural History. It is also deeply lamented by this Society, of which he was one of the earliest Honorary Fellows, and one of the warmest Friends, for he was deeply impressed with the value and importance of the objects which we have in view, and always noticed them with the highest approbation.

We have also to deplore the death of Dr. Charles Peter Thunberg, a Knight of the Order of Gustavus Vasa, and who had for many years the honor of filling the Chair which was once occupied by Linnæus in the University of Upsal, as Professor of Botany and Medicine. This Corresponding Member of our Society was justly celebrated by his Botanical Travels at the Cape of Good Hope and in Japan, which are too well known to you to require any mention; and he composed also numerous Dissertations, which he had the kindness to present to us, on the amendment of the Swedish Pharmacopeia.

We have lost, by the untimely and tragical death of a Corresponding Member of this Society, M. Choris, many interesting communications which we hoped to receive from the results of his Travels in South America. He was an Artist of some eminence, and had already made a Voyage round the World with Captain Kotzebue, a son of the Author whose name is immortalized; and he left France under the auspices of the Geographical Society of Paris, and furnished with instructions from this Society. After visiting the Bahamas, Cuba, and New Orleans, he landed at Vera Cruz, but in travelling from thence to Jalapa, he perished by the hands of Robbers.

Another Corresponding Member of this Society, M. Lewis Augustin William Bosc, died a few months ago, in the 90th year of his age. He was born at Paris, and had the advantage of studying Botany under Jussieu; but after having filled several official stations in his native country, he was proscribed, at the early part of the French Revolution, and went to North America, where he collected many observations on Botany, Zoology, and Agriculture. He was appointed, in 1803, Inspector of the Nurseries of Versailles, and was elected, in 1825, "Professeur de culture" in the Jardin du Roi. He was a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, and the numerous Essays which he published, in several periodical works, bear honorable testimony to his scientific acquirements.

From these mournful subjects, upon which I am unwilling to expatiate, I proceed to mention an event which forms, indeed, an epoch in the history of this Society, and which inspired universal joy as well as unbounded gratitude. I need not add, that I allude to the gracious kindness of His Majesty, in condescending to become the Patron of this Society, in conferring upon us that distinguished mark of his royal favor, which we were so anxious and ambitious to receive. His benignant protection which is bestowed upon those objects which are valuable in themselves, and tend to promote the happiness and welfare of his Subjects, will, I am confident, add energy to all our exertions, and excite an ardent desire in the heart of every Member of this Society, to endeavour, by all the means in his power, to deserve the patronage of our Sovereign. The best and most acceptable tribute of our gratitude which we can offer to our gracious Monarch, will be derived from our zealous, persevering, and successful pursuit of the objects for which we were established, and by which we were recommended

to his favor; and we may be assured that we shall greatly contribute to his satisfaction, if our exertions, which are so laudable and useful in their design, should, in their results, be beneficial to his Subjects and to Mankind.

During the last year, we have been very highly honored by the condescension and kindness of the Emperor of Austria, of the Emperor of the Brazils, of the King of Prussia, of the King of Sweden, and of his Son, the Prince Royal, in deigning to become Members of this Society. These distinguished favors are extremely gratifying to us, and cannot fail to be of very great service in promoting our objects on which those Sovereigns have been pleased to bestow so flattering a mark of their approbation. We must also acknowledge, with sincere gratitude, the lively interest which has been manifested for our success by their Representatives in this country, some of whom we have had the pleasure of seeing at our meetings, and all of whom expressed their earnest desire to facilitate our communications, and to forward our views.

From the Report of your Secretaries you have had the satisfaction of learning, that the number of our Corresponding Members, particularly on the Continent, has been very much increased; and we have reason to expect from them communications of great importance. We have received, also, an accession of 56 additional Fellows, and I rejoice to find amongst them several persons who are of high eminence in the Medical Profession. This Society will always hail with peculiar joy, the accession of persons who belong to any branch of that Profession, and who must fully appreciate our objects, and are eminently qualified to promote them. The learned and illustrious President of the College of Physicians, for whom I entertain the greatest veneration, and of whom I have enjoyed the friendship, during

more than twenty-five years, is an Honorary Fellow of this Society, and though you must deeply regret, you cannot, however, be surprised at his absence from our meetings, as you know that he is always most actively and most usefully occupied in restoring health, or, when that is impracticable, in alleviating sufferings.

The Reports of the Librarian and of the Conservator are also very gratifying, and they have informed you that a considerable number of Books and Pamphlets has been added to your Collection, and that twelve Herbaria, containing no less than 7795 Plants, have been presented. Through the munificence and kindness of the King of Bavaria, and of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, you have received Collections of Plants indigenous to their dominions. The East India Company has also had the goodness to furnish you with a great number of Duplicate Specimens which it possessed of Medicinal Plants. Our late President has kindly given to you the Herbarium, which was collected by himself in the Island of Jersey, and Dr. Benjamin Guy Babington, a Collection of Plants from the Mauritius; Dr. Hancock has very liberally bestowed upon you a most valuable Herbarium of new and very curious Plants, and Dr. George Barclay, the Plants which were collected in the Island of St. Vincent by the directions of your late President; and last, but not least, in this enumeration, your Director has presented to you his immense Collection, which is the fruit of the labour of seven years.

Many interesting and important Papers have, during the last year, been read at your Meetings, and that which, without any disparagement to the others, claims the preference, and is entitled to the Gold Medal which your Council has awarded, is the communication of Dr. Hancock on the *Angustura Bark Tree*, which, as you are well

aware, is imported in considerable quantities and employed with great advantage. This had erroneously been named BONPLANDIA *trifoliata*, but was first ascertained by Dr. Hancock to belong to a neighbouring Genus, and is now termed by him GALIPEA *officinalis*. This great and valuable discovery, which affords an additional proof of the extreme utility of Botany to the Materia Medica, deserves your grateful acknowledgment; and the importance of his communication is very much enhanced by his having employed the *Angustura Bark*, with great success, in cases of contagious disorders. It affords me particular satisfaction that we have the pleasure of seeing Dr. Hancock on this occasion, and that I have the opportunity of thanking him in the name of the Society, of expressing our respect for his talents, our admiration of his exertions, and our earnest hopes that we shall often benefit by his assistance, and often receive his instructive and excellent communications, and of offering to him our best wishes for his prosperity, and for the continuance of his health in those distant regions to which he intends to return.

(The President then addressed Dr. Hancock and presented to him the Gold Medal.)

Another Paper of great curiosity and merit was also written by Dr. Hancock on the VANDELLIA *diffusa*, a Decoction of which acts as an Emetic, and is employed to cure both continued and intermittent Fevers; and that Plant was also used by him, and with favourable results, in chronic disorders of the Liver. In those cases it would be very desirable to find an effectual substitute for those mercurial preparations which may be dangerous in their application.

The Silver Medal of this Society has been awarded by the Council to Professor Lamberto Frescobaldi, of Florence,

for his valuable communication on the Herbarium, presented by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and will be forwarded to him at an early opportunity.

From Dr. Berthelot, Professor of Botany in the College of Oratava, in Teneriffe, we have received an excellent and very useful communication on the VISNEA *mocanera*, which is administered internally as a styptic, and has been employed with great success in cases of obstinate Hæmorrhage. Some Syrup, prepared from that Plant, has been sent to us, and I am very desirous that its efficacy in this country should be subjected to trials, which, if they should be favourable in their results, would eminently entitle Professor Berthelot to an honorary reward from this Society.

An admirable Paper has been communicated by Dr. Grateloup, of Bordeaux, on the utility of Botany to Medicine, and will be perused with the greatest satisfaction by you all, and even by those who heard it at a recent Meeting. The Council hopes that some of these valuable Papers will be printed in the forthcoming Number of our Transactions, which, we confidently expect, will appear in about six weeks; and as I do not wish to anticipate the pleasure which you will derive from their perusal, I have noticed them thus briefly, and will therefore only mention in addition, the interesting Papers of Mr. Read, on the Medicinal Plants of the Azores; of Sir H. Willock, on the Endive; and of Colonel Ready, on the GEUM *Canaderse*, which appears to be an excellent Tonic, and to be particularly useful in the Diarrhœa of children, who had been cured by it after other medicines had been administered without relief.

In consequence of the great accession of Corresponding Members, and of the communications which we have had the happiness of establishing with several scientific Societies

on the Continent, it was judged expedient by the Council to appoint a Committee of Correspondence, which has already been of much service to you, and ardently desires and strenuously endeavours to promote your interests.

After this general retrospect of the proceedings of this Society during the last year, I trust that I may be allowed to offer a few observations on the objects of this Society. They are concisely but very clearly defined in the Prospectus, which states, that this Society was instituted for the purpose

> " Of investigating, by means of Communications, Lectures, and Experiments, the Medicinal properties of Plants, their Botanical characters, and Chemical constituents;
>
> " Of promoting the study of the Vegetable Materia Medica of all countries;
>
> " Of collecting and describing the various substances appertaining thereunto;
>
> " Of improving their Pharmaceutic preparations;
>
> " Of disseminating, by correspondence and publication, such discoveries as may be made of new Medicinal Plants, and of new uses or preparations of those which are already known;
>
> " Of adjudging honorary or pecuniary rewards to the authors of such discoveries;
>
> " And of cultivating Medicinal Plants."

The general design is therefore the extension and improvement of the Vegetable Materia Medica through the means of Botanical inquiries, of Chemical analysis, and of Medical investigations and experiments. We never entertained either the desire or the intention of establishing new theories, which must be hazardous, which might be dangerous, and which would deservedly expose us to the censure of the

world, and more especially of the Medical Profession. We do not attempt or even wish to form a sort of Revolution in Medicine, to subvert the doctrines, or to supplant the practice which we find established; we are not actuated by such presumption, nor do we proceed on such principles. We have thought, and we have still the strongest reasons to think, that the Medicinal properties of Plants have not yet been sufficiently ascertained, and not yet accurately known, and are highly deserving of a patient and attentive examination, and of careful trials. For a proof of this assertion, and without referring to the ancient Herbals, in which some Plants were not perhaps correctly defined, I need only remark, that modern works of that description, and on Medical Botany, often mention, with doubt and uncertainty, the virtues which are ascribed to particular Plants, and do not notice the trials, if any, which were made of their efficacy, and, in many cases, contain contradictory statements. This is unfortunately the fate of many of our indigenous Plants, an acquaintance with which must be interesting, and might be important. It has also been found by experience, that diseases had been successfully removed by Plants, which some writers allow indeed to be efficacious, but consider to be possessed of different properties from those which would be useful in such complaints. All these are proofs of an imperfect knowledge, on which full reliance cannot be placed, and to which further researches are indispensably requisite.

To these researches Botany is of the utmost importance, by enabling us, with respect to those Plants which are nearly allied to each other, to distinguish those which are poisonous from those which are harmless, and those which are known to be medicinal from those which are not at present considered to be such. Nor is this the only use

and advantage of that science in the study of Medicine, for it also enables us, by the exterior character of a Plant, to form some judgment of its properties. The world is indebted to a German, Joachim Camerarius, of Nuremberg, for the first discovery of the invaluable principle, that Plants which coincide in their exterior forms are allied in their properties, a principle which was in the following century confirmed by Linnæus and Jussieu. Upon this principle we proceed in new discoveries from those Plants of which the medicinal qualities are well known, to those which are little known, and even to those which are altogether unknown. With this view, Botany becomes important and attractive, instead of being, what it may sometimes appear, a mere classification and nomenclature of the Vegetable kingdom. The immense and almost infinite variety of Plants which we see around us, becomes highly interesting, and we find ourselves in the midst, not of a crowd of strangers but of acquaintances, whose connexions and characters are well known to us.

Let it not, however, be supposed that we can derive advantage only from those persons who are skilled in Botany, and that a knowledge of that science is absolutely requisite to constitute an useful Member of this Society. I am, as you all know, and as the preceding observations have sufficiently shewn, fully sensible of the great importance of Botany; but I must contend, that the practical trials of any Vegetable, which are made with care and patience by a Member of the Medical Profession, and which are attended with success, are in the highest degree valuable and beneficial, although he may not be able to give a Botanical description of the Plant, or even to name the Genus and Species to which it belongs. Botany may, in some cases, lead, but ought, in no case, to limit our inquiries;

and the evidence of facts must always be considered to be, what it really is, superior to all others. For example, the Roots of the common TRITICUM *repens*, which is a very troublesome Weed in our meadows, are employed on the Continent, and with great benefit, as a mild aperient, and are given in a decoction to purify the blood; and yet it might not appear from botanical analogy that the Plant possessed such properties, as it is one of the *Gramineæ*, some parts of which are considered to be only nutritive.

The Chemical Analysis of a Vegetable is undoubtedly curious, interesting, and useful; but we all know that it is much more imperfect and much less satisfactory than the Analysis of substances from the Mineral kingdom. The real essence which constitutes the active property of a Vegetable, and produces its medicinal effects, may sometimes elude chemical examination; and yet such an examination ought to be pursued with a view of making such discoveries as may be in our power. The nature and qualities of those substances which impart to a Vegetable its peculiar taste, and which may also give to it the peculiar qualities which it possesses, are not always within the scope of chemical analysis; and after the most careful experiments, it is found that only an imperfect enumeration has been made of the various principles which it contains.

The utility of Chemistry in Medicine is eminently shewn in Pharmaceutic Preparations, when it is indispensably requisite to endeavour, as far as possible, to fix that which is volatile, to preserve that which is corruptible, and to retain in every case those properties in which the virtues and efficacies of the Plant are found to consist. It is no less necessary to avoid the decompositions which might unskilfully be produced through an ignorance of the affinities and the deterioration which might result from an improper

preparation. A most curious Paper was read lately at a Meeting of this Society on the *Guaco,* which experience has shewn to cure those who had been bitten by the Rattle-snake, and which has even been employed with success as a preservative against the attacks of that reptile; and I was informed by a gentleman, who is an ornament of this Society, as well as of the Profession to which he belongs, I mean Lieut. M. C. Friend, that the expressed juice of that Plant, which had been perfectly efficacious in securing the animals that had been inoculated with it against the attacks of a Rattle-snake, had, in two days afterwards, lost by fermentation much of its power, and the trials which were then made of it were not attended with the same results.

Medical Investigation and Experiments are of primary importance to the objects of this Society, and ought to be zealously and constantly, but carefully and cautiously, pursued; and I cannot too strongly recommend to you, the actual trial of the medicinal properties of Vegetables, as I am fully convinced that nothing can be more requisite, that nothing can indeed be so desirable, and that nothing can so much contribute to promote our views, and to extend and to improve the Materia Medica. For this purpose, it is not intended to proceed rashly or ignorantly, or upon grounds which are insufficient to warrant the trials. In some cases, they would be made in consequence of the Botanical Analogy between the Vegetable, which is the subject of examination, and others of which the medicinal qualities are known. In other cases, the trials would be recommended by Chemical Analysis, if it shewed that the Vegetable possessed the principle, which is believed to constitute the medicinal virtue of some others, and if it is found in that Vegetable unmixed with such qualities as might counteract its effects, or might, in other respects, be

injurious. Again, in other cases, trials would also be made from knowing that a Vegetable had been used with success in a variety of instances, though it had been employed by persons who do not belong to the Medical Profession; and the traditional evidence which is often found upon the subject, is not to be disregarded, and ought not to be undervalued. I have known, for example, that an Infusion in Vinegar of the leaves of the common Artichoke, has been administered, with great advantage, in cases of Rheumatism, and without acting always as a Diaphoretic; and has accomplished a cure when other remedies had failed, although that Plant is regarded by a medical writer as merely diuretic, and useful only in Dropsy. His observation may indeed have been applied only to the esculent parts, and not to the Leaves which grow on the stem, and which are employed in rheumatic complaints; and we all known that, in some cases, the secretions, in different parts of the same vegetable, are totally different in their nature and qualities, of which a striking instance is given in the Peach.

When a vegetable is administered, not in a simple state, but combined with other substances, the experienced Medical Practitioner will carefully investigate the nature of the preparation which is prescribed, and will consider what are the chemical affinities of its constituents, whether any decomposition or chemical alteration is produced by their mixture, which of them are useful, and which of them may be regarded as useless, or as mere vehicles for the others. Without venturing to give any opinion upon the new system of homœopathic medicine, on which I am incompetent to judge, and according to which no substance is to be combined with any other when it is medically administered, it will readily be acknowledged, that the simplicity of a preparation is in itself a considerable recom-

mendation, and enables the Medical Practitioner to form a more correct estimate of its effects. It would not be sufficient, nor would it be satisfactory to this Society, to state in general the effects which had been produced by any application, for in every case they should be distinctly and minutely specified, and a full report should be made of all the symptoms and of all the circumstances of the patient.

I look forward with the greatest anxiety and impatience to the results of such trials, which will eminently conduce to the honor of our Society, to the advancement of our objects, and to the improvement of the Art of Medicine. I ardently desire to see those results communicated to this Society, and through our Transactions to the world; and if my humble opinion and my most earnest recommendation should have any weight and influence, I would conjure those Members of our Society, who belong to the Medical Profession, to use all the exertions in their power, and to employ their sagacity and skill in pursuing an object, which is of inestimable and incalculable value.

It would of itself be a distinguished honor to our Society, and would afford a decisive proof of its merits and of its services, and would confer a signal benefit upon our country, if the result of these researches were simply to substitute indigenous Plants for some of those which are brought from a great distance, and purchased at a great expense. You all know how often those articles are adulterated, or even falsified; and although there may have been some exaggeration, there was unfortunately too much truth in the statements which were made upon that subject by an eminent Chemist. I was informed, that a person who was many years ago examined before a Committee of the House of Commons, and who had stated in his evidence, that he had imported an immense quantity of Starch,

was asked for what purpose so large a supply was required, and that he answered with great frankness, that it was purchased by him in Lisbon at one penny per pound, and was retailed by him at several shillings a pound, under the name of *Arrow-root*. Such a falsification is not, I believe, to be detected by Chemical Analysis, which, in many cases of adulteration, has produced such useful and important discoveries. With respect to indigenous Plants, you are certain that no adulteration or falsification can take place; you have besides the advantage of employing them without their having been injured by the effects of long voyages, and of the passage in some cases of the Equator. They may also be better suited to the complaints of those who live upon the same soil and in the same climate in which they are produced, than other Vegetable Substances which are brought from countries that are totally different from ours. I concur entirely in the opinion of M. Loiseleur de Longchamps, as quoted by Dr. Grateloup in his excellent communication, which I have already mentioned, that it is not necessary to procure from another hemisphere all the Drugs which we employ. I have also the strongest reason to believe, that some very common Plants in this country would afford excellent substitutes for several valuable Medicines; and such substitutes would be of extreme importance to the poorer classes of the community, who, from the great expense of medicines, are often deterred from taking them, till the disease with which they are afflicted assumes a dangerous character, or becomes difficult of cure. They would also be of the greatest advantage in Hospitals, and in the Naval and Military Service, and would, with respect to the former, enable them to administer relief still more extensively than it is at present in their power.

This is not, however, all that we hope and confidently expect to accomplish; and I entertain a firm and well-founded conviction, that the Researches of our Society will discover Plants, many of which may be indigenous to this country, that will not only be satisfactory Substitutes for those which are now employed, but would also supersede those mineral preparations which may be injudiciously and injuriously administered, and would effect more speedily, or more safely, or with greater certainty, than is at present practicable, the cure of diseases.

We know that the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, who is infinite in Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, has "nothing made in vain;" and that in the order of his Providence there is nothing which is unnecessary, nothing which is superfluous, nothing which does not contribute to his wise and beneficent Designs. If we contemplate his works in the Vegetable Kingdom, we find that many of them may be created to delight by their beauty, their brilliancy, or their fragrance; that many of them were intended for our food and for that of other animals; that many of them are medicinal; and that many others are usefully employed in arts and manufactures. There remain, however, an immense multitude of others which, with our narrow views, with our limited information, with our imperfect judgment, are considered of no value. Some of them are found in the greatest abundance, propagate themselves with extraordinary facility, and in different modes, and are admirably contrived by Providence for that purpose; but as they are eradicated with the utmost difficulty, and as we are ignorant of their real uses, they are every where viewed as unwelcome visitors, and are called weeds. I was once told by my learned kinsman, the late Sir Joseph Banks, that "a weed is only a plant which grows out of its proper

place," and that a Tulip or a root of Rhubarb, if it were to be found in a Corn-field, would as much deserve to be called a weed, as a Turnip or a Potatoe which would be seen in a Flower-garden. It is through our ignorance that they are despised; but we cannot doubt that Plants, which are ornamental in themselves, nor, as far as we at present know, useful in any manner, either to the human species, or to any other animals, were not created with those powers of reproduction which furnish them, in vast profusion, and with that tenacity of life, which render it difficult to destroy them, without their having been intended for some purposes of eminent utility and advantage. We might otherwise conclude, that they would not have been endowed with such qualities; but, like many Flowers which adorn our gardens, and which hitherto appear to be distinguished only by their beauty or their perfume, they would have been liable to the same accidents, and have required to be reared with the same care, and would not, from their luxuriance and abundance, force themselves upon our notice. It was said by a Poet, that

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its fragrance on the desert air;"

and in the same manner we may observe, that many Plants, which are now despised as Weeds, and industriously eradicated, might, if their virtues were known, be carefully collected and usefully employed.

There is nothing so interesting, nothing so instructive, nothing which, to a cultivated mind, is so pleasing as a contemplation of the works of Providence; and the Vegetable World being, as Dr. Grateloup truly remarks, the most productive of medicinal substances, and being already known to yield many which are as active and powerful as any other, there is an extensive field for the important and be-

neficial exertions of this Society. Utility is the best test, the truest criterion, of the advantages of every study, of every pursuit, and, indeed, of every thing else; and, weighed in that balance, I do not hesitate to declare, that the objects of this Society are of pre-eminent importance. We are united upon the principle of utility, and do not, and cannot, attempt to amuse or to attract by shewy exhibitions; but we deserve the approbation, and we hope to receive the support and encouragement of our countrymen, and to render valuable services to mankind.

Health is, we all know, the first blessing, and necessary to the enjoyment of every other, as well as to the full possession of our mental faculties; and it is duly appreciated by us when, for a time, we are deprived of it, and when we suffer from the attacks of disease, or from the various infirmities to which we are subject. Its preservation or restoration is of extreme importance to us all, and is the design of the Art of Medicine, which is more beneficial than any other, and essentially requires the Materia Medica, which, as far as relates to the Vegetable Kingdom, it is the object of this Society to extend and improve.

Before I conclude, allow me to assure you that no exertions of mine shall be wanting in your service, and that I entertain a just confidence, that the Council for the ensuing year will be zealous and assiduous in the discharge of the duties which you have confided to it, and will constantly endeavour to promote the welfare of this Society. Allow me also to impress upon your minds, that the eyes of your Corresponding Members throughout the world, and of the learned Bodies which have entered into communication with you, are fixed upon this Society, and expect that your exertions will be commensurate to the magnitude and importance of your objects; and that it is incumbent

upon you to endeavour, by your zeal, your industry, your perseverance, and your talents, to realize their hopes, and to deserve, more and more, in the course of your progress, the approbation of the World, and the gracious patronage of our Sovereign.

THE END.

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